



# INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN & GENDER

Welcome to the IRWaG website

The **Institute for Research on Women and Gender** is the locus of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship and teaching at Columbia University. Offering an undergraduate degree program in Women's and Gender Studies, and graduate certification in Feminist Scholarship, the Institute draws its faculty from all disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and provides rigorous training in interdisciplinary practice. Courses survey the history and theory of gender studies, preparing students for professional work or further academic engagement in the field.

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*Painting by Huda Lutfi*

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 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

# INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN & GENDER

**History**

◊ History of the Institute

**History of the Institute**

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The Institute for Research on Women and Gender was founded in 1987. Its first director, Carolyn Heilbrun, who served between 1987 and 1989, laid the ground work for faculty development and curricular expansion that have culminated in the current Institute's broad program of graduate and undergraduate offerings. After Professor Heilbrun's departure, IRWaG was chaired by Martha Howell, of the History Department. Professor Howell's five-year tenure was followed by a two year directorship by Professor Victoria de Grazia, of History. She was succeeded by Professor Jean Howard, of English, then Rosalind Morris, of Anthropology, and thence by Lila Abu-Lughod, of Anthropology. The current co-directors are Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Povinelli.

Since its formation, the Institute has grown steadily. It now counts more than fifty faculty among its associated community. Rotating committees oversee the curriculum and executive activities of the Institute, and help ensure that it is representative of a broad array of issues and perspectives.

At present Institute faculty provide feminist instruction and critical pedagogy leading to an undergraduate major, concentrations of several varieties, and a graduate certification program. It also anchors a vibrant interdisciplinary community of scholars, researchers and students, and facilitates collegial exchange through three distinct public lecture series, including "Feminist Interventions," "In the House" and "Occasional Lectures."

In 1998, the Institute undertook a new initiative to hire 4 senior faculty members on a cross-appointment basis with the Departments. Under this initiative, Professors Alice-Kessler Harris (History), Lila Abu-Lughod (Anthropology), Marianne Hirsch (English and Comparative Literature), and Elizabeth Povinelli (Anthropology) joined the faculty.

Providing an intellectually rigorous and socially sympathetic environment has made the Institute a center for student activity. Undergraduate thesis-writing seminars, dissertation workshops, and seminars devoted to directed readings are among a few of the activities that have involved students over the years. A Feminist Pedagogy class, directed at graduate students who intend to teach in the academy, is also offered once a year, for a single credit.

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 Sojourner Truth

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

**INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN & GENDER**

**Programs of Study**

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Undergraduate Program
- ❖ Graduate Program

**Introduction**

The Institute for Research on Women and Gender is the locus of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship and teaching at Columbia University. Offering an undergraduate degree program in Women's and Gender Studies, as well as honors and special concentrations, and graduate certification in Feminist Scholarship, the Institute draws its faculty from all disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and provides rigorous training in interdisciplinary practice. Courses survey the history and theory of gender studies, preparing students for professional work or further academic engagement in the field.

- Undergraduate program
- Graduate program

The degree in Women's and Gender Studies at Columbia College, taught in cooperation with Barnard College's Women's Studies Department, provides students with a culturally and historically situated, theoretically diverse understanding of feminist scholarship and its contributions to the disciplines. The program is intended to introduce students to the long arc of feminist discourse about the cultural and historical representation of nature, power, and the social construction of difference. It encourages them to engage the debates regarding the ethical and political issues of equality and justice that emerge in such discussions. And it links the questions of gender and sexuality to those of racial, ethnic, and other kinds of hierarchical difference. Through sequentially organized courses in women's and gender studies, as well as required discipline-based courses in the humanities, social sciences and history, the degree provides a thoroughly interdisciplinary framework, methodological training and substantive guidance in specialized areas of research. Small classes and mentored thesis writing give students an education that is both comprehensive and tailored to individual needs. The major degree culminates in a two-semester thesis-writing class, in which students undertake original research and produce advanced scholarship. Graduates leave the program well-prepared for future scholarly work in women's and gender studies, but the degree also prepares students for careers and future training in law, public policy, social work, community organizing, journalism, medicine, and all those professions in which there is a need for critical and creative interdisciplinary thought.

The graduate program provides courses in feminist theory, inquiry, and method for students enrolled in departmental doctoral programs and in the professional schools. Students are welcome to take one or more of these courses, which challenge disciplinary perspectives and offer inclusionary frameworks of analysis, as desired. Students who wish to achieve certification in feminist scholarship should follow the guidelines below. Certification testifies to mastery of a body of cross-disciplinary literature and enhances employability, especially in Women's Studies and related programs.

The Women's and Gender Studies office is located, along with the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, at 763 Schermerhorn Extension. All inquiries concerning Women's and Gender Studies should be addressed to the Women's and Gender Studies Undergraduate and Graduate Directors, Julie Crawford and Lila Abu-Lughod.



## Programs of Study

- » Introduction
- » Undergraduate Program
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## Undergraduate Program

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### Undergraduate Program

The degree in Women's and Gender Studies at Columbia College, taught in cooperation with Barnard College's Women's Studies Department, provides students with a culturally and historically situated, theoretically diverse understanding of feminist scholarship and its contributions to the disciplines. The program is intended to introduce students to the ongoing arc of feminist discourse about the cultural and historical representation of nature, power, and the social construction of difference. It encourages them to engage the debates regarding the ethical and political issues of equality and justice that emerge in such discussions. And it links the questions of gender and sexuality to those of racial, ethnic, and other kinds of hierarchical difference. Through sequentially organized courses in women's and gender studies, as well as required discipline-based courses in the humanities, social sciences and history, the degree provides a thoroughly interdisciplinary framework, methodological training and substantive guidance in specialized areas of research. Small classes and mentored thesis writing give students an education that is both comprehensive and tailored to individual needs. The major degree culminates in a two-semester thesis-writing class, in which students undertake original research and produce advanced scholarship. Graduates leave the program well-prepared for future scholarly work in women's and gender studies, but the degree also prepares students for careers and future training in law, public policy, social work, community organizing, journalism, medicine, and all those professions in which there is a need for critical and creative interdisciplinary thought.

### FOR A MAJOR IN WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES

The major degree will require students to take either V1001x, "Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies," or V3111, "Feminist Texts I: Wollstonecraft to Beauvoir" (students are encouraged to take both if possible); V3112, "Feminist Texts II: Beauvoir to the Present;" either V3311, "Colloquium in Feminist Theory," or V3813, "Feminist Inquiry;" and V3521 and V3522, "Senior Seminar," (two semesters). The first semester will focus on conceptualizing, researching, and organizing the senior essay; the second semester will be devoted to writing and presentation of the essay.

In addition to these core courses, women's and gender studies majors must take a minimum of five approved courses that focus on women, gender, and/or feminist perspectives. In order to provide the breadth necessary for an interdisciplinary major, students must take at least one women and gender studies course each from the methodologies of the humanities (the literatures, classics, religion, art history, philosophy, etc.) and the social sciences (history, anthropology, sociology, economics, etc.). At least one of these courses must focus on global/transnational or comparative issues or non-Western cultures and at least one on race and/or sexuality. These courses may be offered by women's and gender studies, another interdisciplinary program, or the departments.

Finally, to ensure grounding in a particular methodology, students must take at least four additional courses in the social sciences, humanities, or pre-med, which need not focus on gender; they are strongly encouraged to concentrate these courses within a single discipline. Students interested in women's and gender studies are encouraged to begin planning their course of study as early in their academic careers as possible.

### HONORS IN WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES

Typically, honors in women's and gender studies will be awarded to students with (1) a grade point average of at least 3.6 or higher in women's and gender studies or related courses; and (2) a senior thesis that has been recommended for honors by the professor of the senior seminar and the student's faculty advisor, and (3) approval by the College. A limited number of students are granted this standing, and final approval originates from the Dean's Office. However, the Undergraduate Director, in consultation with the senior seminar professor and the student's faculty advisor, may propose honors for an extraordinary academic performance, with final approval resting with the College.

### SPECIAL CONCENTRATION FOR THOSE MAJORING IN ANOTHER DEPARTMENT

V3112 Feminist Texts II, either V3311 Colloquium in Feminist Theory, or V3813 Colloquium in Feminist Inquiry; plus five additional approved courses on gender.

### FOR A CONCENTRATION IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

COURSES: THE SAME REQUIREMENTS AS FOR THE MAJOR, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SENIOR SEMINAR SEQUENCE

### FOR A PREMEDICAL CONCENTRATION IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

V3112—Feminist Texts II; three approved courses in either the social sciences or the humanities; and either  
 V3311—Colloquium in Feminist Theory, or  
 V3813—Colloquium in Feminist Inquiry.

Premedical concentrators have the option to write a senior thesis; students wishing to do so should enroll

In,  
V3521—Senior Seminar.

#### **COURSES APPROVED FOR THE WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES MAJOR**

The courses listed below have been approved for the Women's and Gender Studies Major at Columbia College and in the School of General Studies. This list does not include all of the many courses at Columbia that address issues of concern to women's and gender studies majors or concentrators. Students should plan their courses of study, beginning no later than their second year, in consultation with the Undergraduate Director.

In order to be accepted for graduation credit by Columbia College, all courses taken for the major must be approved by the Columbia College Committee on Instruction. Unless otherwise noted, all courses in women's and gender studies have been approved, and we have done our best to verify that all departmental courses listed below have also been approved. However, it is the student's responsibility to check with the Undergraduate Director about the status of any departmental courses that are not included in the current Columbia College Bulletin.

#### **PRIMARY AND AFFILIATED COURSES**

Primary courses focus on women, gender, and/or feminist perspectives. Affiliated courses include women, gender, and/or feminist perspectives as one of several foci. Majors and concentrators in Women's and Gender Studies should select their five required gender courses from the primary list. Students are encouraged to use the list of affiliated courses to choose their five courses within a particular area of scholarship. With prior permission from the Undergraduate Director, students may use a course from the affiliated list to fulfill their five courses on gender.

#### **TESTIMONIALS FROM PAST MAJORS**

#### **Why major in women's studies?**

“ IRWaG has offered me a coherent, open, supportive, and challenging space for critical work at a large, urban university. The professors are hands down the toughest and best I've ever had. They have defined my intellectual experience at Columbia, motivated my hopes and goals for the future, and encouraged me to explore how critical social engagement can, does, and will change the world. Beyond the professors, the interdisciplinary structure of the department has pushed me to see the intersectionality not only of race, class, gender, and sexuality, but also of often isolated disciplines. IRWaG is easily the best thing about my academic experience at Columbia. ”

-Emma Kaufman '08

“ I was also able to have extensive personal contact with my professors, including Elizabeth Povinelli, who served as both my thesis advisor and the undergraduate coordinator -- a benefit that is unheard of in other departments. ”

-Monica Ager '07

“ I really believe there exists a great degree of personal and scholarly commitment of IRWaG professors to their students, teaching, and material. In terms of the skills of reading, research, writing, and classroom debate, I could not have been better trained than at IRWaG. Many of my peers in graduate school, and certainly at Columbia, never had the chance to take an extensive regimen of seminars nor to work closely with professors, until their M.A. studies. ”

-Andrew Hao '08

For more information on the undergraduate major, please visit the major-advisor web page.